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Draft report

Addendum

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VII. Information technology

Introduction and overview

1. At its 468th meeting, on 21 September 2005, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning information technology (A/60/93, paras. 72-74).

Discussion

2. The view was expressed that the introduction of new information technology tools was not always wholly beneficial, as it sometimes entailed extra work and transferred some of the work to other staff groups. Some technological innovations, such as computer-assisted translation (CAT), could actually slow down the work process by creating new tasks, such as the building of translation memories. The Committee was given information about the pilot project on off-site translation, which had been initiated in January 2005. Although there were cost benefits associated with the use of off-site translators, there were also a number of disadvantages, including an increased workload for programming officers and front-office staff. Some delegations expressed the view that technical innovation should be introduced carefully and should respect the specific intellectual nature of the work carried out by language staff. It was agreed that although the cost factor was important, the paramount consideration should always be the quality of work produced. Moreover, new technologies should be subject to vigorous analysis before their introduction.

3. During a videoconference held at the Committee's 467th meeting, on 21 September, representatives of the conference services from the four duty stations expressed satisfaction with the reliability of the Electronic Meetings Planning and Resource Allocation System (eMeets) and the APG software for interpreter

assignment, which were both fully operational. The introduction of the two systems had improved the efficiency, timeliness and quality of services and planning. The management of conference servicing resources had also been improved by the capacity to produce up-to-date statistical and management reports. The progress achieved across duty stations in integrating information technology into management and documentation-processing systems among conference services at all duty stations was noted. The resulting increase in interaction, information exchange and resource-sharing among the four duty stations was also welcomed. Concern was expressed, however, at the apparent disparity in the allocation of resources for information technology. Owing to its relative lack of resources, Nairobi continued to rely on other duty stations to develop and maintain its information technology capacity. The situation in Nairobi should be improved as a matter of urgency, but not at the expense of other duty stations. In that regard, delegations welcomed the plan to create a P-3 information technology position within the Division of Conference Services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, but stressed that this alone would not resolve the situation. Member States would be monitoring the situation very closely.

4. Although each duty station clearly had its own specific requirements, the hope was expressed that the process of integrating the four conference-management systems would be continued with a view to establishing a truly global and integrated conference-management system. Some delegations also sought assurances that the increased transparency and accountability afforded by the new technologies was also being extended to external clients, such as regional and other major groupings. Concern was also expressed that new technologies did not always function in all six official languages of the United Nations and that information technology was more functional in certain languages than in others. Delegations stressed the importance of respecting the equality of the six official languages, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 59/265.